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Food & Nutrition

August 1981 Volume 11 Number 4



Budgeting food dollars is one of today's toughest challenges, especially for low-income families. But if families are dedicated to cutting corners, there are ways. • Most communities have some resources to help people learn how to stretch their food money. Local USDA extension offices, supermarkets, and social service agencies are places to find counseling in planning and organizing a food budget. • There are alternatives to traditional shopping, too. Many communities boast farmers' markets, food cooperatives, and food fairs. They sometimes offer attractive savings and good buys. • This issue explores a variety of ways communities are helping low-income people cope with limited food budgets, while providing nutritious meals for their families.

Looking for advice on budgeting and buying food?

For many families, help is as near as the local supermarket. Some food stores have special materials for food stamp participants and other families whose budgets are especially tight.

Food Marketing Institute

Food Marketing Institute (FMI), a national association for supermarket retailers and wholesalers, recently produced three pamphlets to help food stamp shoppers cope with inflation. The brochures provide shopping tips, menu plans, and monthly and weekly shopping lists, all planned for three different food stamp families—a family of four, a single elderly man or woman, and a Spanish-speaking family of four.

FMI developed the pamphlets with help from extension agents in New York City. The association sent copies to food stamp offices, members of the press, low-income community groups, and to their 1,100 members.

Linda Halleran, FMI's manager of consumer information, says about 150 of their members have consumer relations representatives on their staffs. Their duties include providing consumers with information on nutrition and budgeting through ads, speaking engagements, publications, and consumer advisory boards.

For more information, write:

Linda Halleran
Food Marketing Institute
1750 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Giant Foods

Giant Foods, one of the largest supermarket chains in the Washington, D.C. area, is one of FMI's members with an active consumer relations department. Giant stresses

economical shopping for consumers of all incomes.

Giant Foods makes available a free monthly flyer—*Thumbs Up*—to its customers. The flyer notes trends in food prices, less costly items, and tips for shopping wisely. It also offers menus with nutritional and cost calculations. Often issues are based on holiday or seasonal themes.

Janet Tenney, coordinator of nutrition programs for Giant Foods, says they've found *Thumbs Up* to be most popular in low to middle income stores. They advertise *Thumbs Up* once a month in radio spots. The spots discuss consumer information relating to that month's *Thumbs Up* theme.

Giant got added mileage from newspaper ads they ran in the spring and summer of 1980. The ads offered four recipes per week, using items they had on sale. They also included serving suggestions to complement the recipes nutritionally. Giant has compiled the recipes and now sells the collection for 38 cents through its stores. The booklet is called *Thrifty and Wholesome Recipes or Eating Right When the Budget's Tight*.

During March, National Nutrition Month, local dietitians discuss nutrition themes with customers at Giant stores. This year the theme was "Breakfast—Quick and Easy." The dietitians demonstrated quick, easy, and low-cost breakfasts; handed out flyers that reinforced the demonstrations; and answered any general questions customers had on nutrition.

Tenney says Giant sees senior citizens as a special audience who often are on low fixed incomes. To give them extra help in eating properly, Giant is producing a guide especially for elderly shoppers. Members of the consumer affairs department also go to various community sites and lecture to elderly consumers—as well as others—on nutrition and consumer issues.

This past spring, Giant began putting out information on special diets in response to senior citizens and others who have requested this kind of information.

Tenney says the two most important ideas low-income shoppers need to learn are unit pricing and private labels.

Unit pricing tells how much an item costs per unit of measurement. By comparing unit prices, shoppers can compare costs of the same item from different size containers. Giant has found that only about 25 percent of elderly and less affluent customers use unit pricing. Yet it is a major money-saving tool in almost any supermarket.

Private labels and generic foods offer low-cost alternatives that low-income shoppers frequently pass up. Tenney says we all have an enormous teaching job to do in each of these areas. For more information, write:

Janet Tenney, Nutrition Programs
Coordinator
Giant Foods
P.O. Box 1804
Washington, D.C. 20013
Telephone: (202) 341-4100

Social service agencies, community aides, and volunteers can play important teaching roles once they learn some food and nutrition basics. Here's how nutritionists in two areas are working to give people the skills they need.

Workshops in Pennsylvania

The Allegheny County Health Department sponsored a workshop on "Keeping the Cost of Eating Down," in April. This was the first of four workshops they are sponsoring this year.

Most of the 200 participants in the workshop were paraprofession-

als who work with low-income people but who have no nutrition background themselves. Participants included aides, volunteers, social workers, and others who work with such programs as food stamps and WIC (the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children).

The 1-day workshop focused on meal planning, shopping, and storing food. WIC nutritionists on the health department staff talked about: cost-cutting strategies; menu planning; shopping lists; generics; cooking and storing food; and saving energy. A Dairy Council representative discussed reading labels. A consumer affairs officer from the Food and Drug Administration discussed additives.

Barbara Deskins is a nutritionist on the WIC staff in Allegheny County. "The WIC program is fairly large in this, the Pittsburgh, area," Deskins said. "We've been giving training programs for our WIC staff since the program began. And we've also been called on to help train others in nutrition. So we thought we'd give a series of workshops for any paraprofessional who might be interested."

They held a second workshop on prenatal nutrition on June 10, focusing on infants' nutritional needs, breastfeeding, preparing foods, and feeding babies with special nutritional needs. The last two workshops will be on feeding preschoolers and expectant mothers. They are scheduled for September 15 and November 5, respectively.

Each workshop costs participants \$15, which includes study materials, a morning snack, lunch, and a certificate of attendance.

For more information, contact:

Barbara Deskins
Nutrition Services
Allegheny County Health
Department
3441 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15213
Telephone: (412) 578-8054

Training in New England

USDA nutritionist Ellen Garrahie trains those who work with food stamp recipients in the New Eng-

land states. The people she trains include Extension Service aides, children's advocates, church and food bank volunteers, local food stamp staffs, and others who are in direct contact with food stamp families.

Garrahie's workshops focus on eating economically but well on a food stamp allotment. The October 1980 issue of *Food and Nutrition* reported on a series of workshops Garrahie held in Maine, with help from the state food stamp staff and



the Cooperative Extension Service.

Last winter Garrahie trained food stamp workers in Vermont. But, because of the cold, snowy weather, Garrahie used closed circuit television, instead of workshops. To reach people across the state, Garrahie appeared on two separate "shows" that were shown at six sites. She talked about the background and history of the food stamp program, the need for nutrition and consumer education in the program, and ways to reach food stamp recipients.

She told her audiences *how* to teach as well as *what* to teach and listed resources available in the community. She includes the Cooperative Extension Service, the WIC program, and the State Department of Public Health in her list of important resources.

For both shows, Garrahie used a two-way audio and visual hookup so the audience could ask questions and comment after her prepared remarks. Many people offered their own tips for planning, shopping, and cooking wisely.

For more information, write:

Ellen Garrahie
Food and Nutrition Service
New England Regional Office
33 North Avenue
Burlington, Massachusetts 01803

TIPS

At their April conference, "Keeping the Cost of Eating Down," the Allegheny County Health Department gave participants several tools for helping families. We've adapted some of them for use here:

1 Shop as infrequently as your storage facilities permit. You'll conserve time, energy, and gasoline.

2 Compare prices in the stores available to you. Shop at the store that provides the kinds of foods and other products you want at the prices you want to pay. Shop at more than one store only if it is practical in terms of the time and energy it costs you.

3 Prepare a shopping list from the menus you've planned. Be sure to use store advertisements and the newspaper in preparing your list. But be flexible and change your mind about intended purchases when you find better buys.

4 Take as much time as you need to compare products and prices, and read labels. Seek the information you need to make good decisions about what to buy.

5 Develop skill in estimating how many servings you will obtain from packages of meat and prepackaged fresh vegetables and fruits.

6 Know the current costs of foods you buy regularly. The list will not be long because you tend to purchase the same foods week after week.

7 Comparison shop and use unit price information. Compare the costs of different brands of the

same foods. Compare the unit costs of packages that differ in size.

Compare the costs of products of different quality. And compare the costs per serving of meat, fresh fruits and vegetables, frozen vegetable dishes, and so on.

8 See if you can save by buying generics or house brands.

9 Buy fresh foods when they are plentiful, that is, in season.

10 Shop whatever day(s) of the week your store provides you with price advantages.

11 Check the weight and unit price of: foods in newly designed packages; sale items; and multiple-priced deals.

12 Buy the largest package consistent with your need for the food and with your ability to store it.

13 Buy by grade when you can. Match quality to intended use. For example, when you're buying canned tomatoes for a stew or soup, you can save by buying Grade C canned tomatoes rather than Grade A. The less expensive Grade C tomatoes are lighter in color and less uniform in size, but they are just as wholesome and nutritious.

14 Look for open date coding to find out how fresh products are.

15 Take advantage of sales, specials, and coupons, but not without evaluating the products to see if they will really save you money.

16 In purchasing ready-to-eat food products, try to determine if the cost of the convenience is worth what it costs you.

*Adapted from Meal Management
Faye Kinder and Nancy Green
Fifth Edition*

Food and Nutrition

The grocery list as a management tool

1. Determine the amount of money to be spent for food for the entire week: \$ _____.
2. Plan your menus for the week.
3. Break your shopping list into food groupings.
4. Estimate the amount to be spent on each grouping. The total should roughly equal the total in Item 1 above.

Food group	Percent of weekly food money	Approximate amount to be spent
Dairy	_____ %	\$ _____
Meat, poultry, fish, eggs	_____ %	\$ _____
Flours, cereals, baked goods	_____ %	\$ _____
Fruits and vegetables	_____ %	\$ _____
All other items	_____ %	\$ _____

5. Using the menus you have planned for the week and the outline to the right, fill in foods and prices for each food group.
6. Check staple items that need to be purchased, such as flour, sugar, tea. Add these to the appropriate groups. It's helpful to keep a list in the kitchen to note these items as they become depleted.
7. List foods to be purchased according to the floor plan and layout of the store where you shop. Categories might include:

Fresh fruits and vegetables	Flour and cereal
Canned foods	Meat, poultry, fish
Frozen foods	Dairy and eggs
Bread and baked goods	Other foods
8. When you get to the store, shop according to your plan, but be flexible within categories. Take your menus along so you can see at a glance where substitutions can be made if a planned item is not available or if you find a better price on an unplanned item.

Planned spending by food group

Dairy

Amount to be spent \$ _____

Food	Amount	Price
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
		Total \$ _____

Meat, poultry, fish, eggs

Amount to be spent \$ _____

Food	Amount	Price
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
		Total \$ _____

Flour, cereal, baked goods

Amount to be spent \$ _____

Food	Amount	Price
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
		Total \$ _____

Fruits and vegetables

Amount to be spent \$ _____

Food	Amount	Price
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
		Total \$ _____

All other items

Amount to be spent \$ _____

Food	Amount	Price
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
		Total \$ _____

Grand Total \$ _____

Help in food budgeting is sometimes available as a free service through private organizations. Along with other budgeting skills, families learn how to shop, prepare and store food.

Consumer Protection Association

The Consumer Protection Association (CPA) is a nonprofit organization that helps people in the Cleveland, Ohio, area solve their consumer problems. Many of CPA's clients come seeking help when they "have been taken advantage of, high pressured into a contract, or can't get a warranty honored," as CPA literature states.

CPA takes on their cases and does more, free of charge. Many of their clients have deep-rooted financial problems that emerge as CPA's counselors delve into each case. Many clients are referred to CPA by social service agencies, such as the Ohio State Department of Welfare.

The counselors carefully review clients' budgets with them. "We can pinpoint specific problems only when we see a client's whole financial picture," says John Jones, head counselor at CPA. Slowly the client learns how he or she can become self-sufficient, independent of creditors and government aid, like food stamps and welfare checks. This may take a few years.

"Our goal is to run ourselves out of business," continues Jones. "We hope to make each client self-supporting." CPA's receptionist and secretary, a former client, is one of many people the association has helped become self-supporting.

The five counselors handle about 80 people, total, each day. That includes appointments, walk-ins, and phone calls. Often, part of their counseling is in food budgeting. They teach clients how to shop, prepare food, and store it. They help clients learn the most economical places to shop—such as no-frills and salvage or day-old

stores. They teach clients to buy in bulk, to use coupons, to read labels.

"One client said she paid \$180 for groceries for 2 weeks. I took her shopping and showed her how I would shop with the same money and stretch it another week," said Jones.

CPA also counsels clients on using utilities, purchasing wisely, and making home and auto repairs.

For more information, contact John Jones or Solomon Harge
3134 Euclid Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44114
Telephone: (216) 881-3434

Urban League

Budgeting classes are also free through the Urban League in Flint, Michigan. Not only that, but students and their young children are picked up by a new Urban League van, and someone watches the kids while parents attend class. The teacher, Margaret Box, says, "The only charge for the class is concentration."

Although the classes aren't limited to students by sex, economic class, or race, most students are low-income. Box limits the number of students per class to 20. Fifteen students, she says, is optimal though, since she works closely with each student on details of their personal budgets.

Box says, "Many students haven't the first idea how to budget. It's most difficult for younger mothers, aged 19 to 26. They often don't understand the concepts at all at first."

The class meets for 6 weeks, three times a week, and new classes start a week after the previous one ends. The class meets from 1 to 3 p.m., so parents can be home for lunch, go to class, and be home when school is out.

Box starts the class by discussing landlords' and tenants' rights and mortgages; then the use of utilities. And she talks about how to make house repairs—from electrical problems to plumbing.

Next, she discusses food matters, in terms of cost versus nutrients. For instance:

Is it cheaper to buy 5 pounds of

flour, or 25 pounds? Is it cheaper to spend \$1.00 for one loaf of bread at the neighborhood store or \$1 for five loaves of day-old bread at a store several miles away?

Stretching meat dollars—people think higher priced meats are most nutritious. That's not true, says Box. She discusses nutrients and shows the students how to fix cheaper cuts of meat.

Most people don't make 30-day menus and stick to them. Box teaches them how.

People forget that soup, sandwich, and salad as a meal is a nutritious combination. It's also low in cost.

Box tells students to use the services available to them in their community. Most helpful, she says, is the Cooperative Extension Service.

Box's students must pass a final exam and get grades for the course. If they pass, they get a half credit toward a high school diploma from the Flint school board. The school board has been offering this credit to her students since 1974.

Box gets much satisfaction from the contacts she keeps with former students. "For instance," she says, "two who had taken the class came back 2 years later to say they had been laid off from work but had all their bills paid off, and had savings to fall back on. Without the course, they really would have been in trouble, they said."

Students hear about the classes through the Department of Social Services, churches, local papers, and talk shows.

For more information, write:
Margaret Box
Flint Urban League
4401 Detroit Street
Flint, Michigan 48505
Telephone: (313) 789-8541

Creative shopping can help stretch food dollars



Joining a food cooperative is one way families can save on their grocery bills. Some co-ops are run entirely by volunteers, who work a few hours a week or month in exchange for shopping privileges. Others have paid managers, and members simply pay a fee to join.



Senior Citizens Grocery, Inc.

When senior citizens in Portland, Oregon asked the owner of a local grocery store chain to lower prices, he wouldn't budge. "It's not too practical an idea," he told them in 1977. The matter might have ended there, but, instead, store-owner John Piacentini offered senior citizens a grocery store of their own.

Piacentini had no plans for the convenience store he had just closed. So he offered the group the storefront and equipment rent-free, and \$20,000 for merchandise to launch the store.

The enthusiastic senior organizers called a public meeting for elderly residents to create a planning committee and draw up a list of things to do. These included publicizing the new store to area seniors, writing bylaws for the



soon-to-be nonprofit corporation, and establishing a board of directors.

The elderly volunteers continued spreading the word about the new discount grocery store for seniors. Piacentini helped by providing a media expert who designed and distributed brochures describing the market. He also created advertising skits that ran as free public service announcements on television.

A local lawyer volunteered to draw up the needed legal papers, such as the nonprofit corporation application, a constitution, and bylaws.

The last step was to choose a board of directors to govern and watch over the store's operations, decide which merchandise would best meet seniors' needs, and set store policy. The board set an annual membership fee of 50 cents and a minimum shoppers' age. Today, people age 55 and older can be members. Elderly residents can shop at the store once before joining. Those who can't afford the fee get free memberships. The store accepts food stamps.

Verda Krum manages the store and is the store's only paid employee. She gets help from senior volunteers. She had been a volunteer herself until she became manager in August 1980. The store is open Monday through

Saturday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. It offers fruits, vegetables, sundries, dry goods, a delicatessen, and a range of foods for diabetics and for others on special diets.

"It's a very delightful little store," says widow Lydia Clairmore, who compared prices at other area stores. "They carry national brands and their prices are lower all around."

Clairmore, who grows lots of her own vegetables at home, gave Senior Grocery's produce her stamp of approval. "It's fresh and nice," she says, "and there are a lot of members who bring in some of their own surplus produce to sell or give away."

The store minimizes operating costs and saves customers money because the rent is free, the staff is volunteer, and the stock is limited.

Members live as far as 60 miles away and shop at the store because it carries foods they can't get elsewhere.

For more information, write:
Verda Krum, Manager
Senior Citizens Grocery, Inc.
4707 North Lombard Street
Portland, Oregon 97203
Telephone: (503) 285-4141



Lakes Area Food Co-op

The Lakes Area Food Co-op is a 7-year-old "bag order" cooperative in Union Lake, Michigan. The approximately 300 members pay \$1 each year for the opportunity to have some control over the quality, purchase, and distribution of the food they eat. Barbara McCann, co-op coordinator, figures that she has consistently saved 30 percent on the fruits and vegetables she has bought through the co-op over the 5 years she has been a member.

The co-op is open to its members each Thursday from 11:15 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., from October to May, excluding holidays and days when school is cancelled. Most members grow food in gardens in the summer and so don't need the co-op's benefits then.

The co-op meets in one building of the Multi-Lakes Conservation Association. Multi-Lakes had donated the building and utilities for the co-op's use each Thursday. McCann says the free facility lets them charge wholesale prices for the goods they sell.

They buy most of their food from the terminal where wholesalers and retailers from the entire Detroit area buy their goods. Two drivers leave home around 5:00 a.m. each Thursday to pick up the food.

The major items the co-op offers are fruits and vegetables. At least

one time a month each member must buy one full bag or two half bags of fruits or vegetables. The shopping bags (most of them recycled) are filled with fruits or vegetables that were the best that day. Members pay for bag orders 1 week in advance, and so don't know what they will get until they pick up the order the next week.

A full bag order costs \$5.50 plus a 50-cent expense fee. Half orders cost \$2.75 plus the 50-cent expense fee. (Senior citizens don't pay the expense fee.) The fee covers compensation for the rental of the truck that picks up the fruits and vegetables; gas; food for the drivers (they get one bag order free); phone calls for placing orders with vendors; and plastic bags.

The co-op also offers these special services:

Surplus table: Additional fruits and vegetables are available for members to buy. Most are leftovers from the bag orders.

Meat and cheese: Members order in bulk from a set list of meat and cheeses. They place orders the first and third weeks of the month and receive their goods the second and fourth weeks. They place a deposit for the food when they order it.

Eggs: Sold on the first and third weeks of the month.

Bread: Sold on the second and fourth weeks.

Nuts, grains, beans: Orders are made on the second and fourth weeks of the month. Members receive the orders the first and third weeks.

Honey: Members can buy honey the first Thursday of each month.

Newsletter: The co-op prints a newsletter each month that includes news from board meetings, reminders, and recipes.

Ilene Techner, one of the co-op's members, joined the co-op when she and her family moved into the neighborhood and wanted to make new acquaintances. Because Techner's in-laws lived with them, the co-op waived the waiting list and let them join immediately.

McCann says they try their best to accommodate senior citizens and needy families. They accept food stamps, and about 10 or 15 families use them to pay for their food.

All members must work for the co-op at least once a month, in some capacity. "The co-op makes this easy for parents of small children," Techner says. "They can fulfill their work responsibility for a month by babysitting for another member's children while that member works at the co-op. I share my work duties with another mother. We take turns working and watching each other's kids."

The co-op has no paid employees. They pay expenses like gas and phone calls, and the drivers get a full bag order at no charge. But no one is on salary.

For more information, contact:

Barbara McCann
30910 Sudbury Road
Farmington Hills, Michigan 48018



Thousands of people are rediscovering open air markets and food fairs. Consumers get fresh produce while saving on food, and farmers get a decent return for their products.

Farmers' Markets

Imagine being able to buy juicy sweet corn, plump aromatic peaches, and other freshly picked fruits and vegetables straight from the farm—and at reasonable prices!

Thanks to farmers' markets, that's a dream come true. Farmers' markets are offering consumers attractively priced, fresh produce while enabling growers to get maximum returns.

Farmers markets had been popular for many years, but they began to fade in the late 1950's because of increased urbanization of farmland, stricter health codes, and tough selling and site regulations. But today, with public concern about food costs, there has been a dramatic and welcome comeback.

In August 1979, we reported on a highly successful farmers' market system called Greenmarket, based in New York City. Since then, the market system has grown from 7 to an expected 15 markets this year. It is privately funded and an outstanding example of a new breed of farmers' markets.

Located so that most shoppers can get there by foot or public transportation, the markets strive to appeal to a wide variety of ethnic and economic groups and to provide high quality, low cost fresh farm produce. Some markets accept food stamps.

Barry Benepe, founder and director of the project, feels that the markets play an educational role by providing an appealing and affordable route to good nutrition.

Because participating farmers are restricted to selling their own produce or produce purchased from local farmers the day before the sale, shoppers can be confident their wares will be fresh.

Greenmarket has been almost too successful. They are finding the number of markets they have almost too much to manage. "We will probably be spinning some markets off to local control where there is a strong local agency to sponsor the market," says Benepe.

For more information, write:
Barry Benepe, Director
Greenmarket
24 West 40th Street
New York, New York
Telephone: (212) 477-3220



Agricultural Marketing Project

In 1974 a group of Vanderbilt University students in Nashville, Tennessee, decided to see what they could do about the problems facing both consumers and farmers.

Concerned about the decline in the number of small farms in the South, the small profits being made by farmers, the decrease in consumer demand for fresh fruits and vegetables, and the problem of rising food prices, they formed the Agricultural Marketing Project (AMP), dedicated to bringing farmers and consumers closer together.

Out of numerous meetings of that group with community residents came the idea for a food fair—an open-air bazaar—where farmers would sell directly to consumers.

AMP's goal was to learn enough about food fairs to spur the concept by providing technical assistance to interested consumers and farmers. So in the summer of 1975, with a \$3,200 grant from Vanderbilt, AMP set up a series of demonstration food fairs in Nashville.

AMP members informed farmers about the fairs through posters in seed stores, calls to local agricultural agencies, and articles and ads in rural newspapers. They notified consumers through posters, radio and television talk shows, and feature stories and ads in local newspapers. The strong and hearty response from both farmers and consumers showed the idea could work.

In 1979 the group's efforts led to food fairs held in 39 Tennessee and Alabama cities with over 1,000 farmers participating. Sales in 1979 more than doubled those of 1978, topping an estimated \$1 million.

A typical AMP-sponsored food fair is held once a month on a church parking lot. From 15 to 25 farmers park their trucks, open their tailgates, and sell fruits, vegetables, canned goods, and other produce to about 3,000 eager customers. Only people who grow their own produce may sell at the fairs.

Recently, AMP has been working on a number of different kinds of projects, according to John Vlcek, the group's co-director. For example, AMP worked through the Nashville school system to develop a curriculum on nutrition for fifth and sixth graders.





The freshest produce is, of course, homegrown. For people with access to a home or community garden and tools, a little labor can pay off in big savings. Food stamp participants can use their stamps to buy seeds and plants to grow their own fruits and vegetables.

Gardening in Virginia

Virginia food stamp officials are waging a campaign to encourage food stamp participants to save money by growing their own food. Coordinator Linda Pearson says the purpose of the campaign is to let people know they can use food stamps to buy seeds and plants for gardens that will bear them food.

Pearson worked with Virginia Polytechnical Institute's Extension Service to develop a pamphlet called, "Five Steps to a Better Garden." The pamphlet discusses finding space for a garden, planting, and harvesting. She also produced a companion poster, which she sent along with the pamphlet to local groups and Extension Service agents. This past March, she had a copy of the pamphlet sent to each participant with his or her food stamp allotment.



She also sent the posters to Virginia retailers who redeem food stamps, asking them to help increase public knowledge that food stamps can buy seeds and plants.

For more information, write:
Linda Pearson
Food Stamp Program
Virginia Department of Welfare
Food Stamp Program
8007 Discovery Drive
Richmond, Virginia 23888
Telephone: (804) 281-9046

The curriculum centers on fruits, vegetables, beans, and legumes. It teaches children nutritional aspects of these foods, as well as how they're grown, harvested, and marketed. "Students plan and cook meals, they even video tape their own commercials," says Vlcek. Many schools throughout Tennessee and the U.S. are now using the curriculum.

AMP began a farmer co-op last year, bringing farmers and institutions together. Farmers sold their goods to day care centers, hospitals, restaurants. "Because we were a new business and we suffered a drought, we only sold \$3,500 worth of produce last year," said Vlcek.

Vlcek says they are aiming for sales of \$50,000 this year, to three main groups:

- Wholesalers
- Restaurants and grocery stores
- Consumer buying clubs, some of which AMP is organizing.

AMP has also published a handbook called the *Community Food Education Handbook*. It explains how to start a food education program; profiles various successful groups; discusses who to reach, materials, funding, evaluation, and working in schools. The book sells for \$4.95.

For more information, contact:
John Vlcek,
Agricultural Marketing Project
2606 Westwood Drive
Nashville, Tennessee
Telephone: (205) 758-0343

Information from USDA

USDA has a variety of publications with information on buying, storing, and preparing food. Some you might find helpful include:

The **How to Buy** series, available also in Spanish:

How to Buy Fresh Vegetables HG-143

How to Buy Eggs, HG-144

How to Buy Beef Steaks, HG-145

How to Buy Beef Roasts, HG-146

How to Buy Poultry, HG-157

How to Buy Meat for Your Freezer, HG-166

How to Buy Canned and Frozen Vegetables, HG-167

How to Buy Cheese, HG-193

How to Buy Lamb, HG-195

How to Buy Dairy Products, HG-201

How to Use USDA Grades in Buying Food, HG-196

How to Buy Economically, HG-235

Family Food Budgeting for Good Meals and Good Nutrition, Home and Garden Bulletin No. 94, revised 1980.

Storing Perishable Foods in the Home, Home and Garden Bulletin No. 78.

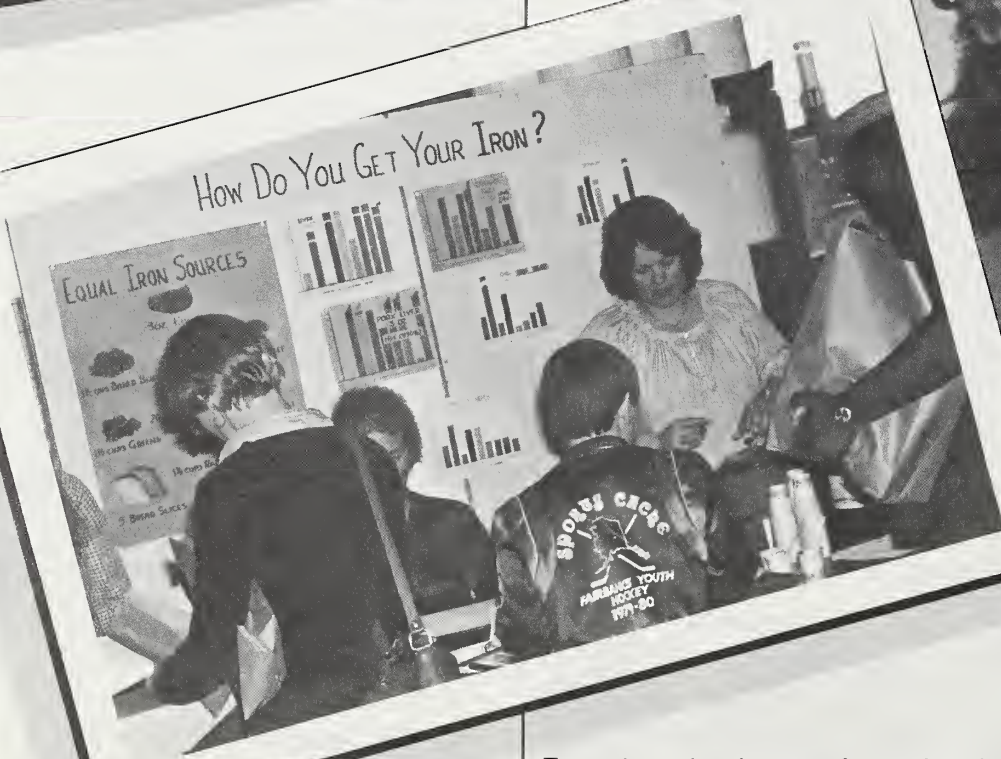
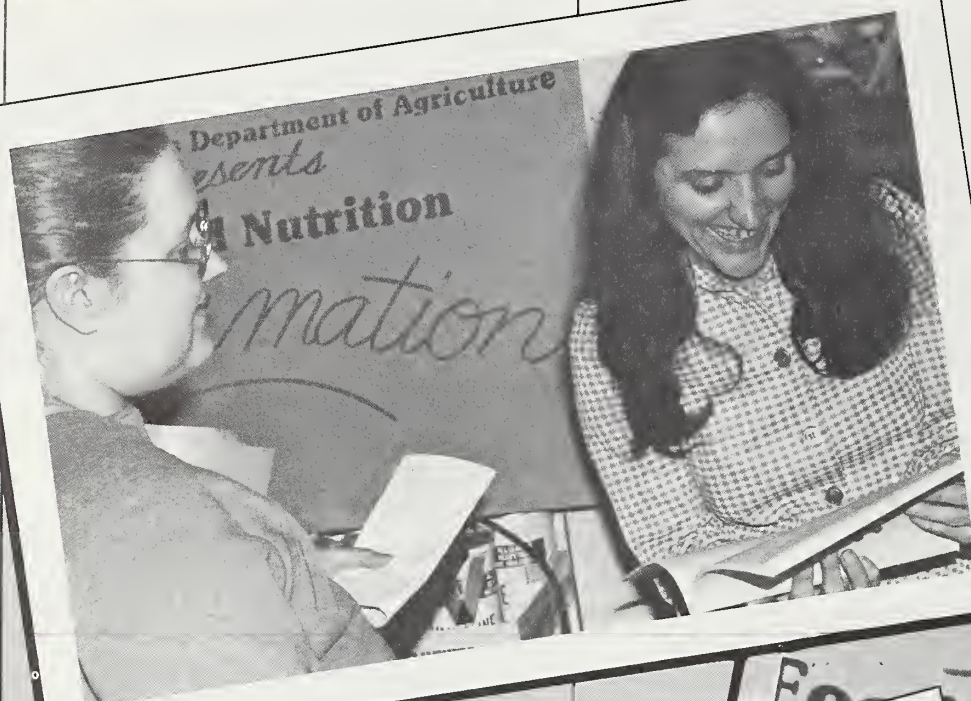
Single free copies of these publications are available from: Office of Governmental and Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. The Publications Center can also send you a list of other USDA publications. Ask for List 5.

Family Fare: A Guide to Good Nutrition is a USDA publication available for \$2.10 through the Government Printing Office. Send a check or money order to: Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

You may also be able to get helpful materials from your local extension office. Extension offices can be found in the white pages of the phone directory under the listings for the county government or the land-grant university. They may go by the name of "Cooperative Extension Service," or "Agricultural Extension Service."

by Linda Feldman

Reaching food stamp shoppers



Extension aides use supermarket demonstrations in Alaska

In Fairbanks, Alaska, the Cooperative Extension Service has been using supermarket demonstrations to reach food stamp families and other low-income shoppers.

Almost 5,000 people—10 percent of the population of Fairbanks—saw one of the first 21 demonstrations conducted in area supermarkets.

Four hundred were from food stamp households. In the more remote village of Galena, one out of five residents saw at least one demonstration.

"We produce five different presentations for supermarkets," explained Marguerite Stetson, director of Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks. "Each presentation had a simple theme and a single menu idea."

Specific demonstrations focused on: dried peas, beans, and other high-protein foods; low-cost milk products; low-cost fruits and vegetables; and foods in the bread and cereal group.

Recipes and information

At each demonstration, four EFNEP aides prepared sample recipes and talked about the featured foods. They used bulletin board displays and handouts to reinforce their message.

According to Stetson, the demonstration on low-cost sources of vitamins A and C was a favorite. The simmering sampler was a broccoli and rice casserole with fresh onion and cheese. The casserole, which served 6 to 8 people, cost \$2.50 to prepare in Fairbanks—about 36 cents per serving. In Galena, where food costs are higher, the casserole cost \$4.00 to prepare—about 57 cents for each serving.

Shoppers got a copy of the recipe to take home, along with easy-to-understand information on the Recommended Daily Allowances

(RDA's) for the nutrients in the casserole. The bulletin board display provided additional information and listed other sources of vitamins A and C. Many people who returned for subsequent demonstrations reported that the casserole was a big hit at home.

At each demonstration, Stetson and her staff tried to gather as well as share information. Aides kept a record of each person who tried the sample or asked a question.

Field-tested the materials

Careful research was part of the project from the beginning. "We interviewed more than 100 food stamp applicants to help us decide where we could reach food stamp families and what information they needed most," said Stetson. They gathered information on the applicants' food knowledge as well as shopping habits.

This research helped them plan demonstrations to address specific nutrition needs and to select stores that had the greatest percentage of food stamp shoppers. Using the data, they could also tell what days and times food stamp shoppers were most likely to visit the stores.

The EFNEP staff field-tested recipes and materials during the first demonstration, then revised them before going to other stores. They learned that three sample menu items took too much time to prepare and serve, and that shoppers were flooded with more nutrition information than they could readily grasp. The decision to have a simple theme and a single menu item grew out of this testing.

Throughout the project, Stetson said, store managers were very helpful. They offered floor space for the demonstrations as well as food for the samples. Some made periodic announcements over the public address system during the presentations and gave them advance publicity in their advertising.

Store managers also donated gifts for a drawing, which served two purposes. First, it attracted people to the demonstration. Second, since shoppers had to fill out coupons to take part, it gave EFNEP aides an opportunity to find out something about the customers'

nutrition knowledge, how they found out about the demonstration, and whether they were food stamp participants.

Evaluating the project

Stetson thinks the store presentations are worth the effort it takes to do them. "Because Alaska has a high turnover in its food stamp caseload," she said, "it's hard to follow-up with individual participants to see how much the demonstrations improved their diets. However, in the limited number of post-project interviews we have done, there is evidence of improvement."

Asked what's ahead, Stetson said more demonstrations. "By carefully targeting times and places over an extended period of time," she said, "it's possible to reach a significant number of people with nutrition education."

Based on ideas that worked during the first demonstrations, future ones will focus on a single nutrition theme to avoid dividing the participants' attention. The EFNEP staff will try to include some media coverage to spotlight the activities and encourage greater attendance. In addition, they plan to involve the Junior 4-H leaders in developing and staffing an in-store demonstration, and they are looking for a site in a low-income housing complex to conduct occasional demonstrations.

Stetson also plans a change in focus. She'll concentrate not so much on what people *know* about food, but what they *do* about it. What do they actually feed their families? And do the demonstrations influence the way the family eats?

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by Tino Serrano

Two Connecticut women help train community workers

Marge Martin and Carol Angell met a few years ago at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Manchester, Connecticut, making up food baskets for families in need. Recently, the two friends volunteered their help in a different way—this time using their food budgeting and buying skills.

Marge and Carol have offered to help FNS nutritionist Ellen Garrahe (see page 4) as she demonstrates how food stamp families can get adequate nutrients using USDA's Thrifty Food Plan. In September, the two women will be sharing their knowledge with community workers at one of Garrahe's nutrition training workshops in Hartford.

Have a lot to share

Both women have had past experience in using food stamps to buy food for their families. Both are wise enough to know that food prices and supplies require constant watching. And both have an eagle-eye for quality, an ability to comparison shop, and the patience to check product labels. They have good cooking skills, too, and that certainly helps.

The friends have quite different situations. Carol is divorced and lives in a small apartment with her sons, aged 10 and 16. Marge and her husband, a housepainter, are the parents of 12 children, with four remaining at home. Because of the seasonal nature of her husband's work, Marge has to plan a food budget for payless weeks.

At a food warehouse or supermarket, their common love of a good bargain is apparent, although they differ on such major issues as coupons (Marge uses them, Carol doesn't), and freezers (Marge has one, Carol hasn't). Both agree that fresh fruits and vegetables are not luxuries. They are a nutritional necessity and add color and content to menus on a limited budget.

Shopping together, Carol and Marge quickly spot a fresh cauli-

flower, one head, 4 pounds, 4 ounces, for \$1.48. At an average 37 cents a pound, it is a bargain. The warehouse has a two-for-\$1-dollar special on 10-ounce packages of frozen cauliflower. That is 75 cents a pound. At other outlets, prices range from 59 cents to 65 cents for a 10-ounce frozen package or \$1.09 for a 20-ounce bag.

Quality is important in fresh produce. The two friends rarely buy marked-down produce.

Marge notes that the cauliflower is well-trimmed, so there will be little waste. The quantity would be more appropriate for Marge's larger family, but Carol could freeze part of the cauliflower in her refrigerator freezer or, more likely, use it fresh as a snack for the boys and put the left-overs in soup or stew.

Oranges are an easily stored produce item with minimal waste. They are on the USDA Thrifty Food Plan and a good buy almost all year. Marge and Carol buy them regularly. En route to the warehouse, Carol remembers she had seen oranges elsewhere at five for 99 cents. In the warehouse, they find a 5-pound bag for \$1.09.

The two women agree that the warehouse offers substantial savings on produce and other products.

At certain times of the year, fresh potatoes are priced high. Then instant or canned potatoes may be

cheaper. Marge picks up packages of hash browns when they are on sale to add variety to the menu. Neither is dogmatic about "cooking from scratch" when packaged foods can add a little variety or quality.

Look for bargains

While they like their produce fresh, the women agree that day-old bread can be a bargain. Usually, they make their own baked goods from scratch but occasionally use mixes. Carol is an expert on waffles; muffins are Marge's speciality. They use powdered milk in baking and at the table. For drinking, both prepare the milk ahead, combining it with regular milk, half and half.

It is in the meat department that Carol and Marge must use the most ingenuity. Whole chicken is usually inexpensive and a menu regular. Carol can get two meals and some soup from one chicken. When she is lucky enough to find steaks on special, Carol makes them go a long way by cutting them in strips, Oriental style, and stir-frying them with broccoli, green beans, mushrooms or onions, and serving with rice. Marge spices her tomato sauce with Italian sausages and uses it twice in one week for spaghetti and manicotti.

Stretching meat in soups and stews is an approach both homemakers use to make meat go further. They also serve main dishes that use small amounts of meat, such as tacos, stuffed cabbage, and peppers, using rice as an extender.

Also, Carol says, macaroni and cheese is an old stand-by. Marge builds in vegetable protein with her homemade baked beans.

Find other ways to save

"Put a gift food into the menu," is a motto for the resourceful duo. Marge once was given a 30-pound bag of onions. She chopped them up, froze them, and later tossed them into soups and stews. Carol recently froze a batch of bluefish caught by her son Jim, an honor roll student who has also contributed pheasant to the family larder.

The freezer issue is a matter of concern to the cost-conscious cooks. When Marge bought her freezer second-hand, her electric bill went up \$5 to \$6 dollars a month. For Carol, such an investment would be impractical. She uses the freezer compartment of her refrigerator for short-range savings. She has also borrowed freezer space from her father for gifts of fish or game.

Picking fruits and vegetables for canning and freezing nets Marge savings. The bright red tomatoes she uses in tomato sauce cost 25 cents a quart (including electricity for processing) when picked at \$4 a bushel. She once froze 10 pounds of brussel sprouts purchased for \$3.50. She's also picked peppers at 25 cents per pound, then chopped and frozen them.

Carol relies on reading labels to find food values. She learned a great deal about food preparing a diabetic diet for her former husband. As she walks through the cereal section, she looks carefully at labels. She notices that a graham cracker cereal, which costs \$1.10 for 12 ounces, has sugar for its first ingredient.

She decides instead to buy a 1-pound box of graham crackers (for 83 cents) and crumble the crackers in a bowl to use with milk as cereal.



Graham flour is the major ingredient, she explains, and there is a substantial cost-per-ounce saving.

Carefully plan trips

In Connecticut, food stamp redemptions show that warehouses are being used more and more by food stamp recipients. Both Carol and Marge have no trouble taking products from the crates and boxes which are arranged in aisles and stacks similar to a supermarket. But Carol finds it difficult to pack her own food at the check-out counter, and she is concerned about the disabled who may not be able to manage this chore.

The cost of gas to get to the warehouse was also a worry to Carol until her son Jim joined a rifle club that practices at a range near the warehouse. When she was able to combine dropping him off with a shopping trip, she felt the trip was cost effective. For Marge, who buys more food, driving for a bargain can pay off. She sometimes gets together with one or two neighbors, as she did recently for a 10-mile round trip to a new meat market where 10 pounds of ground round was on sale for \$1.49 a pound and pork chops were a special for \$1.09 a pound.

The supermarket across the street from her apartment is convenient to Carol. She buys specials and uses the trading stamps she gets there to

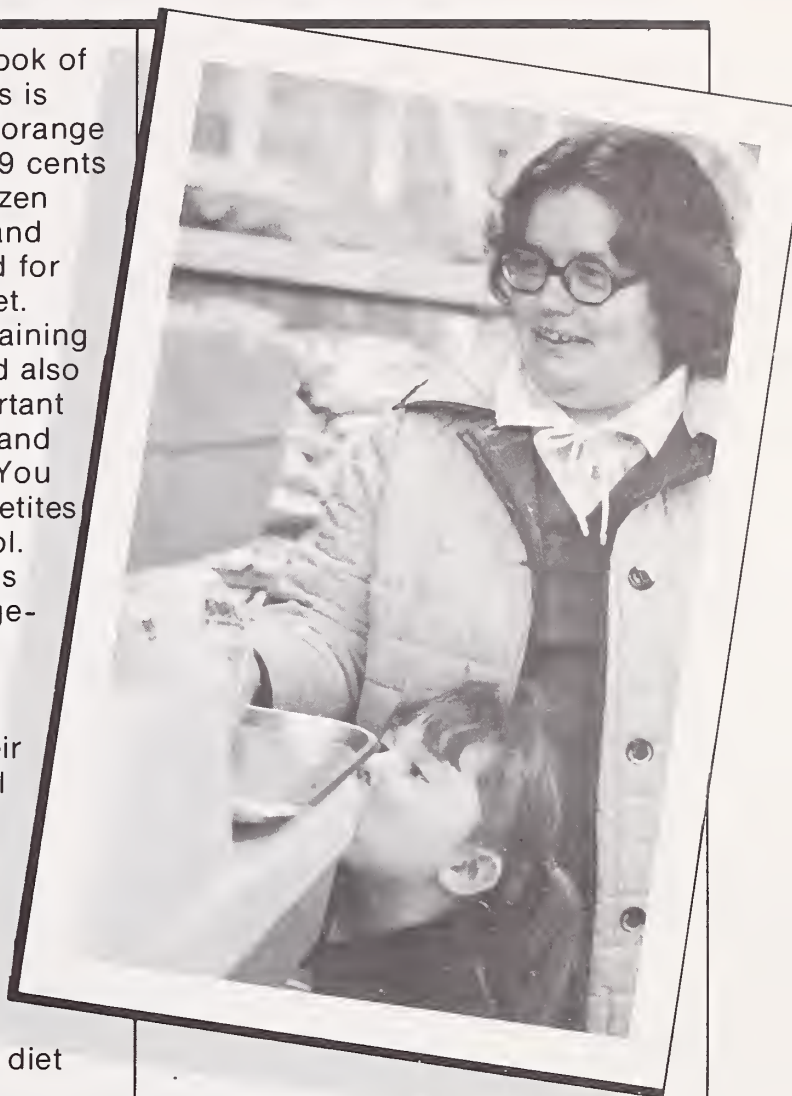
buy more food. A quarter book of trading stamps plus 29 cents is worth a half-gallon of fresh orange juice, usually \$1.19. It was 19 cents and a quarter book for a dozen eggs recently. Milk, sugar, and other staples are discounted for trading stamps at this market.

Both women agree that training children to eat properly, and also to shop and cook, are important in keeping the food budget and the nutrient intake in line. "You can't cater to individual appetites on a low budget," says Carol. Teaching such techniques as chopping and stir-frying vegetables helps the kids appreciate fresh products and varied textures.

With their concern for their children's food habits, Carol and Marge have learned to get as much nutrition as possible from their food dollars. Through their knowledge, many Connecticut food stamp households will be discovering that it is possible to get an adequate diet with limited funds.

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by Catherine Tim Jensen



Food & Nutrition



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Published six times a year by the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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The Secretary of Agriculture has determined that the publication of this periodical is necessary in the transaction of the public business required by law of this Department. The use of funds for printing this publication was approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget through September 30, 1981.

Prints of photos may be obtained from Photo Library, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

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Counseling in food budgeting is one of the services offered by Cleveland's Consumer Protection

Association, a nonprofit private organization. John Jones, (right) is head counselor at CPA. **Page 6**



Senior Citizen's Grocery, Inc., is an unusual discount food store in Portland. It's run by and for senior

citizens. Manager Verda Krum is the store's only paid employee. **Page 7**